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Comedy in Three Acts.

Female Characters
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DICK & FITZGERALD, Publishers, 18 Ann St., N. Y.

LOVE AND A WAY

An Original Comedy in Three Acts

FOR FEMALE CHARACTERS ONLY

BY

EVELYN SIMMS

Author of "Maidens All Forlorn"

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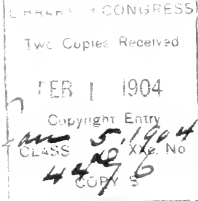
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NEW YORK

DICK & FITZGERALD, PUBLISHERS

18 ANN STREET



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LOVE AND A WAY



CHARACTERS

PHYLLIS MERRICK.....*A wilful young lady*
AMELIA PORTER }*Phyllis's aunts*
AGNES PORTER }
BEATRICE VANE.....*Phyllis's young friend*

TIME.—The present.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—One hour and a quarter.

COSTUMES

PHYLLIS MERRICK. Neat indoor dress suitable for a young girl about eighteen.

AMELIA PORTER. Dress and make-up of an old maid of sixty.

AGNES PORTER. Similar, but appropriate to a few years younger.

BEATRICE VANE. Young lady's walking costume.

PROPERTIES

Book shelf with books. Table, sofa, chairs, etc. Pen, ink and writing materials. Books, magazines, etc., on table. Lighted lamp. A piece of candle. Two sheets. Large hat, cloak and dress, comb, brush, jewel cases and small valise for PHYLLIS. Two letters and watch for BEATRICE. Telephone, with small hand-bell for ringing up. If a fair imitation of a telephone is impracticable, it may be supposed to be located behind a small screen partially hiding the speaker when in use; in any case, the ringing is off stage.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

R. is right hand, L. left hand of stage as seen by a performer facing the audience. C. is centre of stage.

TMP96-006788

LOVE AND A WAY



ACT I.

SCENE.—*Sitting-room, prettily furnished. Table with writing materials, books, magazines, etc., near centre. Book shelf back. Sofa, chairs, etc. Telephone L., back. Doors rear centre and L. Curtained window R. AGNES PORTER discovered standing near table looking despairingly at PHYLLIS, who stands near window.*

PHYLLIS. It's no use, Aunt Agnes. I think you ought to know by this time that when I say a thing I mean it, Nothing can make me alter my opinion about this affair, so I really must beg you not to discuss it further.

AGNES. But, Phyllis, my love, for the sake of that poor young man who's so fond of you, do be reasonable. To refuse to marry a man simply because your aunts consent! Why, it's—it's incredible!

[PHYLLIS shrugs her shoulders and looks out of the window. AGNES frowns, impatiently turns over things on table and comes a few steps nearer PHYLLIS.

AGNES. That is your only reason for refusing him, isn't it? And yet it is really no reason at all. He is devoted to you, and I am sure your feeling toward him is by no means one of indifference. Your Aunt Amelia and I are strongly in favor of the marriage——

PHYLLIS (*interrupting*). That's just it! It would be such a tame affair to marry a man like that. I don't want a quiet, ordinary wedding—full consent of my aunts, congratulations of my friends, heaps of duplicate wedding presents, and afterward no end of humdrum afternoon calls and invitations to dinner. No, thank you! I'd rather not get married at all if it comes to that. And for this reason I refuse to marry Jack Pemberton.

AGNES. Well, of all—Phyllis!

PHYLLIS. Yes, Aunt Agnes?

AGNES. You are spoiling his happiness, *and your own*.

PHYLLIS. Oh, no, I'm not. I shouldn't be happy if I married under these circumstances, and neither would Jack if I grumbled all the time.

AGNES. I've never known you in such a mood before. Don't you consider how selfish it is to talk like this?

PHYLLIS. Selfish or not, I can't help it. I'm sorry if I *am* selfish, but I—I (*walking away from window*)—I've made up my mind, and I'm going to stick to it.

AGNES. Your Aunt Amelia will have to talk to you again. She may be able to reason you out of your whim yet.

PHYLLIS. She probably won't do a bit of good, and I shall get cross if too much is said. Oh, bother!

ENTER AMELIA PORTER.

AMELIA. Well, Agnes, I've come up again to see how far *you've* been able to influence the child. Little enough, I dare say, for *you* have no reasoning powers to exert, my dear. (*To PHYLLIS.*) Gracious, child, what's the matter? You look as glum as an owl.

AGNES. I can't do anything with her, Amelia. She won't listen to *any* argument, and she won't give up her foolish whim about refusing Mr. Pemberton.

AMELIA. Tut, tut! Wait till I begin. Phyllis Merrick, please state your reasons for refusing Mr. Pemberton.

PHYLLIS. I should think you know them by this time, aunt. I've given them often enough.

AMELIA (*scating herself pompously*). No dilly-dallying, child. Do as I say and state your reasons in a concise, rational manner.

AGNES. She has no reasons that I can see. It's a mere whim on her part.

AMELIA. Agnes, are you conducting this conversation, or am I? I repeat my request—Phyllis, state your reasons.

PHYLLIS (*scating herself on arm of sofa and swinging her foot*). Well, then—I want a *romantic* marriage.

AMELIA (*springing up*). A romantic marriage! Dear life, what a notion! A romantic marriage! Upon my word, Agnes, I fear the child is going a little off her head. I do, indeed. A romantic marriage! Bless my soul!

AGNES (*scating herself*). Dearie dear! I hardly know whether I'm on my head or my heels half the time, with all these new notions of Phyllis's.

AMELIA. Don't apologize, my dear. I can tell that from your

conversation. As for you, Phyllis, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to agitate your aunt like this.

PHYLLIS. But surely I have a right to say whom I will or will not marry. If I don't choose to marry Jack Pemberton I don't see why the whole family should act as if I'd committed a crime.

AMELIA. Don't talk in so exaggerated a strain. I'm surprised at you. I am, indeed. Why can't you take this man and be satisfied, and have a proper wedding, with your friends and relations present, like other girls?

PHYLLIS. Because I'm not like other girls, I suppose.

AMELIA. No, you're not. But the comparison is not at all in *your* favor, let me tell you.

AGNES. Oh, Amelia, she's always been so good before!

AMELIA. H'm! In appearance, yes. A rosy-cheeked apple, rotten at the core!

PHYLLIS. We come from the same branch of the family tree, aunt—the family apple-tree I ought to say, after your complimentary remark. There's one consolation, though. You do admit that I'm rosy-cheeked, and *some* apples aren't even that. I'd rather be what you describe me as than crabbed, anyway.

AMELIA. Flippancy, my dear Phyllis, is a characteristic I could never tolerate in the young. Lately, I must say, you have shown very little of the respect due to your elders—in fact, ever since Mr. Pemberton obtained our consent to propose to you. What did you tell him, I should like to know?

PHYLLIS. I told him the truth.

AGNES. I do feel sorry for that young man. So courteous, so chivalrous, so devoted to you.

AMELIA. Don't be soft, Agnes. Spare your sentiments when I'm in the room, I beg you. For my own part, I don't see why a girl wants to get married, and yet that seems the sole aim and object of every girl nowadays. And why you, Phyllis, refuse a good offer like that—when you're actually *fond* of the man, too—simply because your aunts consent—why, it's—it's preposterous!

PHYLLIS. I can't help it! I don't want—and I won't have—a humdrum kind of affair, the kind every one else has, or has had, or will have. I want something novel.

AMELIA. Your levity, my dear, is astounding. Girls expressed proper opinions, in proper language, when I was young. Heaven only knows what has put such ideas into your head, unless it is all these novels you've been absorbing lately—pure, unadulterated, melodramatic rubbish, that's what I call them.

PHYLLIS. Indeed, they're *not*, Aunt Amelia! They are per-

fectly lovely. Why, the last two I've read *couldn't* be better. "Marietta" is adorable, and as for "The Pride of Jennico"—

AGNES (*interrupting*). Touching story!

AMELIA. Touching rot! How many novels have you read this last month, Phyllis Merrick?

PHYLLIS. Nine.

AMELIA. *Nine?* It's more than I've read in all my life! And how many the month before, pray?

PHYLLIS. Seven, auntie; but they were longer.

AMELIA. *Seven!* Seven long novels in a month. Fancy apologizing for the *small* number because of their length. Phyllis, I am ashamed of you. I shall make out a list of studious and instructive books for your immediate perusal. Not one more novel shall you see till you've had a sufficient dose of practical reading. (*Glances toward book shelf.*) What have you there? (*Approaches.*) All of Anthony Hope's, it appears; Merriman, Stanley Weyman, Richard Harding Davis— (*Examines books more closely.*) Do you actually mean to tell me, Phyllis Merrick, that you read Laura Jean Libby?

PHYLLIS. Why shouldn't I?

AMELIA (*despairingly*). Worse and worse! Agnes, what is coming to the girl? Carry those books at once up to the cupboard in the attic. I will replace them myself with more suitable volumes.

[PHYLLIS *takes out an armful and approaches door.*

PHYLLIS. Mayn't I keep any?

AMELIA. *Certainly not!*

[EXIT PHYLLIS, *looking resigned.*

AGNES. Are you not rather hard on the child, Amelia? She is very young, and youth *is* given to sentiment. I'm sure I, for one, fully sympathize with her feelings.

AMELIA. My dear Agnes, you have no discrimination! It is the only way to cure her folly. Miss Van Quirk's finishing establishment was certainly not the best place in the world for Phyllis, and I greatly regret our sending her there. However, there's no use crying over spilt milk; I can only endeavor not to spill any more.

AGNES. I keep thinking about that poor young man. To know, as he does, that Phyllis really cares for him, and to be refused in such a manner—for a mere whim.

AMELIA. Really, Agnes, I am surprised at you. Poor young man, indeed! Fortunate, I call him, to *be* refused by such a whimsical little sentimentalist as Phyllis. I have no patience with such ideas; but, really, it would have been an excellent match for the child. Jack, of course, as the only son, will in-

herit everything, and that means a great deal in his case. And the social position of the Pembertons is as good as our own, which also means a great deal. Furthermore, although I don't hold with these giddy young things who believe that marriage is the sole object of their existence, still, since Phyllis has *not* been educated with the idea of her leading an independent life, I should be very well satisfied to see her safely off our hands while she is still so young.

AGNES (*walking to window*). Yes, it would have been a good match—an excellent match, as you say—from a worldly point of view, but I should not have considered that side of it had I not known that they really cared for each other.

AMELIA. Really, Agnes, you surprise me exceedingly. Were you not my own sister I should doubtless express my feelings in still stronger terms. What are you looking at?

AGNES. Some one is coming up the garden, Amelia. I can't quite see who— (*Leans out.*) Oh! It's Beatrice Vane—to see Phyllis, I suppose.

AMELIA. I suppose so!

RE-ENTER PHYLLIS.

AMELIA. Beatrice Vane is here, Phyllis. I presume you wish to see her?

PHYLLIS (*looking pleased*). See Triss? Then she's come back, has she? Why, it's a whole month since I've laid eyes on her. I should rather think I *do* want to see her.

AMELIA. I should prefer, my dear Phyllis, that you would choose your words a little more carefully, if you please. Beatrice shall come to you up here. Agnes, pray assist me in carrying away the remainder of these books. (*Takes books from shelf. AGNES does the same.*)

[EXIT AMELIA.]

AGNES. How often have I dreamed over these same romances, my dear child. I, too, have had my day with such things. Your Aunt Amelia never did. She could not sympathize with love affairs of any kind. She did not even sympathize with mine.

PHYLLIS. Yours, Aunt Agnes?

AGNES. Yes, Phyllis, mine. Ah, no, my dear, it never came to anything, as you see; but, nevertheless— Ah! Beatrice is coming. I hear her on the stairs. I will go.

[EXIT AGNES.]

PHYLLIS. I wonder if Aunt Agnes felt like this! Am I miserable or am I not? I don't know.

ENTER BEATRICE.

BEATRICE. Hello, Phil! What's the matter? (*Kisses her.*)

PHYLLIS (*throwing herself into a chair*). Matter? Everything's the matter. I'm in the midst of a love affair.

BEATRICE. Oh, Phil! (*She stands gazing at PHYLLIS for a few seconds, then tosses her hat onto the sofa, crosses to PHYLLIS, places a hand on each arm of chair and looks at her again.*) Phyllis Merrick, whoever would have thought it? Oh, I don't mean anything uncomplimentary, dear. It's so surprising, that's all. I'm sure I congratulate you.

PHYLLIS. I'm sure you needn't.

BEATRICE (*standing erect*). Needn't? Your estimation of your future lord and master is not a high one, evidently. Who is the happy man, Phyllis?

PHYLLIS. He's the reverse of happy at present.

BEATRICE. Why, you haven't quarrelled, have you?

PHYLLIS (*rising and walking to window*). Oh—no!

BEATRICE. Then what is it?

PHYLLIS. I—I—I've refused him.

BEATRICE. Refused him? Oh, Phil, tell me who it is!

PHYLLIS (*turning*). It's Jack!

BEATRICE. Not Jack Pemberton?

PHYLLIS. Yes, it is.

BEATRICE. But, my dear child, you *know* you like Jack, and he's perfectly devoted to you.

PHYLLIS. I know that. But I—it's just this, Trissie: I don't *want* it all to go so smoothly. My aunts both consented without any hesitation whatever; there's no obstacle on Jack's side. It would not even have been love in a cottage, which might have afforded a little romance.

BEATRICE. To tell you the truth, I fail to see what you're driving at.

PHYLLIS. And you probably won't see when I've told you. My aunts think I'm slightly out of my mind. The fact is (*toys with things on table*)—I want a romantic marriage.

BEATRICE. *What* a notion! If you're in love with Jack, why can't you marry him in the ordinary way, like an ordinary girl?

PHYLLIS. Because I'm not *like* an ordinary girl, I suppose. Don't make me cross by repeating all Aunt Amelia's arguments. She's been at me the whole afternoon—they both have.

BEATRICE. I don't wonder at it. You've been reading too many novels, Phil.

PHYLLIS. So *she* said. Result—my books go. (*Motions toward book shelf.*)

BEATRICE. But the idea is so—so—

PHYLLIS. Incredible, absurd, preposterous. I knew what you would say, of course. I know what every one will say—every one whom Aunt Amelia tells. But I don't care. If Jack had been poor it would have made a difference; or if one of the families—mine or his—had objected. But no! they are both equally set on the match, and of course that means a commonplace sort of wedding and— (BEATRICE *moves as if to speak.*) Don't interrupt! I know very well what you're going to say. Naturally, my aunts would do everything handsomely. I should probably have the most elaborate wedding dress imaginable, and afterward there'd be a huge reception, and the "happy man" and I would have to stand under a flowery arch or some such nonsense and receive the congratulations of everybody present. And the accounts in the papers would be exactly the same as the accounts of all other weddings—with only the names to create a diversion. (*Recites.*) "The bride was gowned in an elegant creation of white Duchesse satin, elaborately garnitured with real old lace. Her veil of illusion was caught to her rippling hair with a spray of the emblematic blossoms. Her only ornament was a diamond star, the gift of the groom." (*Speaks.*) No, Trissie, that is what I do not want, and that is what I *will—not—have!*

BEATRICE. Well, for my part, I don't see why you bother about such things at all. The game's not worth the candle, my dear, and anyway, there are lots of things far and away more interesting—golf, for instance. Now what more *can* you want than good links and a jolly companion—a man *is* more useful, I admit—and a discreet caddy? I don't want to get married—but then, of course, I've never been asked, and I don't know what I might say under such trying circumstances; but if I were in your place, and I really cared for Jack—well, all I can say is that you're a silly little goose.

PHYLLIS. Very sorry, I'm sure. But I'm afraid that your opinion of me won't alter mine about Jack.

BEATRICE. How you can treat him so shamefully I cannot imagine. Jack Pemberton's the nicest fellow under the sun—

PHYLLIS (*interrupting*). You needn't go into details. Don't you suppose I know how nice Jack is?

BEATRICE. Then why—

PHYLLIS. Spare me. I implore you! I don't want to mention the subject again. You know my reason—let that suffice. Put your hat on again and I'll get mine, and we'll go down to Bell's and have some ice-cream.

BEATRICE (*taking up her hat from sofa*). Not a bad idea, my love. You need something to cool you down.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The same*. PHYLLIS *discovered walking moodily up and down, hands behind her*.

PHYLLIS. It's cruel, cruel, cruel! As if it were Jack's fault—as if it made *any* difference in Jack. What if he *has* lost his fortune? Do I care? And yet both my aunts seem to think it such a terrible offence, for ever since they heard of it they've forbidden me to see or to speak to him, for fear, they say, that he will renew his proposal. They won't have their niece marry a penniless man, won't they? I *never* thought they'd be so mean. And—and Jack hasn't come near me, and I did think he'd want me to comfort him. (*Sinks into chair near table, resting her head on her arms, and begins to cry.*)

ENTER AMELIA.

AMELIA. Phyllis Merrick, aren't you ashamed of yourself, crying like a sentimental school girl? What's the matter with you?

PHYLLIS. It wouldn't help matters if I told you. (*Drops head on arms again*).

AMELIA. Pray sit up and control yourself. You are quite aware how I detest scenes of this sort. I suppose you are still disturbing yourself over the ruined fortunes of that young Pemberton. Well, if I were you I'd stop it. You refused him obstinately enough when you might have married him, and now, because your aunts have very wisely decided that it is a good thing you *did* refuse a man whose fortune is lost, probably through his own fault—

PHYLLIS (*interrupting indignantly*.) It was *not* his own fault, Aunt Amelia.

AMELIA. I allow no one to contradict me. Phyllis, so pray bear that in mind for the future. As I was saying when you so rudely interrupted me—now that your Aunt Agnes and I have

decided that it is fortunate you *have* refused him, you immediately become possessed of the notion that you wish to marry him after all. How do you know that *he* is still of the same opinion concerning *you*?

PHYLLIS. Aunt Amelia! How can you insinuate anything so horrid? You speak of him as if he were the most fickle creature under the sun—as if a breath of wind would alter his opinion.

AMELIA. I am glad to see, my dear niece, that you have learned at least one valuable truism—that one should never judge other people by one's self. However (*as PHYLLIS makes a movement to speak*), we stray from our subject. Mr. Pemberton, as a matter of fact, came to me only last night to beg that, in spite of his misfortune, he should be allowed one more chance of winning you.

PHYLLIS (*interrupting eagerly*). Aunt Amelia! Did he—did he really?

AMELIA. Pray calm yourself. You will suffer no further annoyance from the young man in question.

PHYLLIS. Aunt—Amelia! (*Entreatingly*.) What did you say?

AMELIA. I told him that, under the circumstances, a union with you would be altogether out of the question, even supposing, which I deemed impossible, that you *could* have altered the opinion you held a short time previously. Be quiet, my dear. I have not yet finished. I told him that I wished no communication whatever to be carried on between you, as I did *not* intend my niece to marry a penniless man.

PHYLLIS. Aunt—Amelia, you are—cruel.

AMELIA. Some day, Phyllis Merrick, you will thank me for this—some day, perhaps, when you are a little less prejudiced, and therefore a little less ungrateful. Mr. Pemberton went; let us hope he will remain away. In fact, he mentioned the Philippines as a probable place of future residence. I see you are fast losing what little self-control you possess, so I will leave you for the present. [EXIT majestically.]

PHYLLIS. Oh, Jack, Jack! (*Sits down with arms on table and face hidden. A slight pause, then she starts up.*) I won't stand it—I *won't*. The fact that Jack came as he did proves that he cares for me as much as ever. Why can't I marry him? Do I care for poverty? Do I care whether or not my husband be poor in worldly possessions if he have boundless wealth in other things—in love and honesty, and truth, and courage, and kindness of heart, and tact, and—and—everything else Jack has? (*Suddenly.*) Oh, but he's going away! Aunt Amelia said he was. The Philippines? Oh, never! I think my heart would break if Jack went to the Philippines. (*Wipes her eyes.*) I

don't know what to do, and I haven't any one to help or advise me. Perhaps Trissie would. I'll ring her up. (*Goes to telephone.*) Hello! Hello! 4-0-2-3, please. Yes, forty—twenty—three. (*Aside.*) Of all blessed nuisances—Hello! Didn't you hear? Forty—twenty—three. Is *that* clear? (*Aside.*) If Trissie can't come and help me, I don't know who can. Why on earth—Hello! . . . It's Phyllis Merrick. . . . Is that you, Triss? . . . Oh, Triss, I'm so miserable! . . . What? . . . I'm—so—miserable . . . mis—er—a—ble! Can't you come over? I'm perfectly wretched, and I want your advice. . . . What? . . . Oh, *do* come. You would if you knew why I wanted you. . . . What? The dressmaker? . . . Oh, hang the dressmaker! Put her off and come to me, Triss. . . . You *must*. Listen, it's about J. P. . . . What? Hello! Oh, I thought they were ringing us off. . . . I said J. P. . . . No, *not* a justice of the peace. You know who J. P. is. Do come. . . . Ah, I thought you would. . . . All right, I'll expect you at once; three minutes from now at the outside. (*Rings off.*) That's all right. (*Advances down stage.*) I'll feel better when I've talked to Triss. But I think Jack might send me word of some kind.

ENTER AGNES.

AGNES. To whom were you telephoning just now?

PHYLLIS. To Beatrice. I want her to come over. I need some one to talk to, goodness knows.

AGNES. My dear child, you are perfectly well aware that I should be only too glad to talk to you. Surely you can confide in your own aunt.

PHYLLIS. No, I can't; not about Jack, anyway. (*Pleadingly.*) Oh, Aunt Agnes, if you *knew* how much I want to see him; if you *knew* how much I love him.

AGNES. But you are so changeable. A little while ago you would not hear of him as your lover, and now—

PHYLLIS (*interrupting*). And now, Aunt Agnes, I am no longer pretending indifference to him on the score of not wishing a too commonplace wedding. It *would* be romantic to marry a man just after he had lost his fortune, if only you and Aunt Amelia weren't so cruel. (*Hides her face in handkerchief for a moment.*) I did think *you* would have been on my side.

AGNES. I am very sorry for you, my dear, but I cannot help agreeing with your Aunt Amelia in this particular case. And although I should never consider the money question *alone*, still you must realize that it would never do for a niece of the Por-

ters to marry a penniless man. Love is essential, indeed, to true wedded happiness, but you cannot live only on love.

PHYLLIS. But suppose I had consented to marry him at first. If I had, you couldn't have stopped me now.

AGNES. Such a supposition is not to be considered, Phyllis, for the realization of it does not exist. I am afraid you must abide by our decision, my dear.

PHYLLIS. You were so sorry for him before, but you don't seem to realize that it is just as hard on Jack as it ever was—harder, because now I *want* to marry him. (*Impatiently.*) Oh, I told you it was no use talking to you about him. (*Sits down.*)

ENTER BEATRICE.

BEATRICE. The maid told me you were up here, so I thought I'd save you the trouble of coming downstairs. (*Sees AGNES.*) How do you do? (*They shake hands.*) I hope I haven't disturbed you?

AGNES. Not at all, Beatrice, not at all. I am very glad you have come, and I shall be more so if you succeed in showing Phyllis how extremely foolish she is. I never *saw* such a girl in all my life.

[EXIT, *shaking her head.*]

PHYLLIS (*tragically*). Have you heard?

BEATRICE. Heard what?

PHYLLIS. They won't let me marry Jack because he's lost his fortune. As if that mattered when we love each other. (*Rests elbow on arm of chair and head on hand.*)

BEATRICE. Yes, I've heard.

PHYLLIS. Who told you?

BEATRICE. Jack. He's frightfully cut up about it.

PHYLLIS (*springing up*). You saw Jack? Oh, Triss, tell me—tell me what he said.

BEATRICE. He said he would give anything to see you once before he goes.

PHYLLIS. He *is* going, then? Where? When?

BEATRICE. I don't know. But he *is* going. And, Phil, you must remember that he does not yet know you would be willing to listen to him now—that you *do* care for him very, very much.

PHYLLIS. Oh, if I could only tell him before he goes—if I could only see him, write to him—

BEATRICE (*glancing around*). Are you sure no one can see or hear? Your aunts must know nothing of this. (*Slowly.*) Jack has sent you a letter.

PHYLLIS. For me? A letter for me—from Jack? Give it me, Triss, give it me.

BEATRICE (*carefully producing letter*). He was forbidden to see or to write to you. He dare not let your aunts know what he has done. But his love for you is strong enough to break their command. (*Hands letter to PHYLLIS, who reads it eagerly, BEATRICE watching her.*)

PHYLLIS. He says he is going very soon—probably to the Philippines—and he asks for one word of farewell to carry with him. He says he dares to hope for this much, because he knows that at least I care for him as a friend. He goes to retrieve, or to try to retrieve, his loss. Will I send him one line—one word—to wish him success?

BEATRICE. Will you?

PHYLLIS. *Will I?* I can't let him go like this. I can't let him go—perhaps forever—without knowing the truth. Jack was too honorable to say anything about his love for me after his interview with Aunt Amelia and Aunt Agnes, but at least he ought to know that *I* will not throw him over when he is in trouble. Will you take my answer to him, Trissie?

BEATRICE. Yes. I told him I would if you wrote.

PHYLLIS. I shall always love you for this. (*Sits down at table, drawing ink, etc., toward her. Begins to write, then pauses.*) I hardly know how to express what I want to say. It—it's the hardest letter I ever had to write. (*Continues writing. BEATRICE moves about room and takes up a book or two while waiting.*) Triss, tell me. Do you think this will do? (*Reads.*) "Dear Jack, when Aunt Amelia told me she had forbidden you to see me again I thought you were going without a word. A week is an endless time to wait for a thing you're afraid won't come after all, and yet I might have known you wouldn't forget. Jack, I don't want you to go. I'm very—unhappy. I don't want to be left all alone, now. *I* don't care whether you are poor or not. Oh, you know what I mean. Yours, Phyllis." (*Pause.*)

BEATRICE (*slowly*). Ye-es, I think that will do. Fold it up and give it me quickly. No one must see it. (*PHYLLIS does so.*)

PHYLLIS. You don't think I've committed myself? You are sure Jack *does* care as much as ever?

BEATRICE. As sure as I am that I am Beatrice Vane.

PHYLLIS. Or vain Beatrice?

BEATRICE. Ah, you're in better spirits already. And I dare say Jack will be, too, when I've given him this. Poor fellow! It's rather rough on him.

PHYLLIS. But a man can rough things so much better than a girl. *He's* not forbidden to go for walks alone for fear of his meeting me; *he's* not forced to listen to a course of daily lectures on the advisability of "niecely" obedience, and the injurious consequences of reading what Aunt Amelia calls melodramatic rubbish. *He's* not bullied—it's the only sufficiently expressive word—into wading through horrid dry volumes about horrid dry things. Look there! (*Points to book shelf.*)

BEATRICE (*approaching*). Gracious, what a learned person you'll be if you get through all these! You've got every one of Spencer's *and* of Huxley's, I should think. (*Reads.*) "Method and Results," "Man's Place in Nature"—

PHYLLIS (*scornfully*). "Man's Place in Nature!" Who wants to read that? Man's place in nature is at the feet of women, or nowhere. As for the other—"Method and Results," isn't it—well, I suppose this is Aunt Amelia's method for bringing me to a proper frame of mind. What the result will be Heaven only knows.

BEATRICE. I wish I could smuggle a few books up to you, but I am rather afraid to do it. I must come in often to cheer you up instead. Well, dear, I'd better go now, if I am to see Jack this afternoon.

PHYLLIS. Yes, do go; go now, at once. Don't run the risk of missing Jack, please! Tell him—oh, tell him what you like. But go—do go! (*Almost pushes her to door.*)

BEATRICE (*laughing*). You're in a jolly big hurry to get rid of me, Phil. Never mind, I'll forgive you for Jack's sake. Good-bye, dear. (*Kisses her.*) [EXIT.]

PHYLLIS. Jack *hadn't* forgotten me. Oh, you dear, dear boy! (*Re-reads letter.*) If he weren't going away I think I could still afford to be happy. But he's going—going, and I don't know when I shall see him again. (*Sits down with face hidden.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The same. Time, the next evening. PHYLLIS discovered sewing near table, on which is a lighted lamp. BEATRICE stands in doorway. As curtain rises PHYLLIS lets sewing fall into her lap and rests head on hand, sighing.*

BEATRICE (*after a few seconds*). Phil!

PHYLLIS (*starting and turning*). Triss! Is that you?

BEATRICE (*advancing*). Yes, it's I. Aren't you surprised to see me at this time of night?

PHYLLIS. To tell you the truth, I am. But I'm very glad, all the same. I thought I was doomed to spend the evening by myself, for Aunt Amelia declared my temper was enough to try the patience of a saint; and Heaven knows Aunt Amelia's no saint, so you can imagine the state *her* patience got into. It began to be a little too hot for comfort then, so I came up here and left them to themselves. Besides, two's company and three's none, as I innocently remarked, only Aunt Amelia mistook my innocence for impertinence, so I cleared out in a hurry.

BEATRICE. I must say I should not like to have the care of you at present, Phil.

PHYLLIS. You speak as if I were a wild animal or a lunatic. But goodness knows the things I have to put up with are enough to make me one or the other. If you've only come over to talk like that—oh, look here, I don't want to get cross with you of all people, but it's getting on my nerves.

BEATRICE. Poor child, I don't wonder. Now look here. To use your own expression, if you hadn't talked so much yourself when I came in you'd have known by now *why* I came.

PHYLLIS. Why did you come?

BEATRICE. You might have guessed it was something important to bring me here now. It's nearly eight o'clock. Father and mother have gone out, or I might have found it hard to get away. (*Slowly*.) I've brought the answer to your note.

PHYLLIS (*jumping up*). From Jack?

BEATRICE. Yes, from Jack. Here, read it.

[*Gives letter to PHYLLIS, who tears it open and reads eagerly. As she finishes she lets the letter fall and turns to BEATRICE with an exclamation of delight.*]

PHYLLIS. Oh, Trissie!

BEATRICE. Gracious, Phil! What on earth has he said to make you look like that?

PHYLLIS. He—he wants me—to run away with him.

BEATRICE. *Phyllis!*

PHYLLIS. He says it is worth losing his fortune to know that I care so much. He says (*picking up letter*) he will mind nothing else if only I will consent to be with him now—to go away with him. And as my aunts won't consent to our marriage, he says that this is the only way left.

BEATRICE. But when. How?

PHYLLIS. Now; at once; to-night. If I consent I am to place a lighted candle outside the window, on the sill. He will be there

for me at eight, and—and he says he has arranged everything for our marriage to-night, trusting to my consent. We have very little time, Triss, less than a quarter of an hour. (*As she speaks she opens table drawer and takes out a piece of candle.*) Is this big enough? I was using a candle for something the other day, and popped the rest of it into the drawer. It comes in handy now. (*Lights candle and places it outside window, BEATRICE watching her in evident amazement. Then she moves to door L., stops and looks in a dismayed way at BEATRICE.*) What must I do? What shall I take?

BEATRICE. You are really going?

PHYLLIS. Going? I should think so! Dear old Jack! (*Suddenly.*) You don't think my aunts will come in, do you?

BEATRICE. Oh, no! They're safe in the library downstairs. Come, if you're going you must lose no time. Take as little as possible. Put what you need into your small valise. You'd better bring the things in here, and I'll help you get them ready.

[EXIT PHYLLIS L. BEATRICE goes to window and pulls aside curtain

PHYLLIS (*from next room*). Trissie! (*Appears at door with hands full of things and a dress over one arm.*) How am I to get down to him?

BEATRICE. Give me the sheets off your bed and I'll knot them. If they aren't quite long enough, Jack will catch you when you drop. But, Phyllis, you *can't* take all those things.

PHYLLIS. Why not? (*Drops them onto chair.*)

BEATRICE (*picking up dress*). When a girl elopes, my dear, she doesn't take half her wardrobe with her. Take these back at once. Your little valise is all you can carry, and that will only hold the things you *need*.

PHYLLIS (*disconsolately*). But that's my new dress. I've only worn it once.

BEATRICE. I am sorry, but it can't be helped. You must do as I say. Give me the sheets, Phil, and I'll get them ready.

[PHYLLIS disappears L., returning in a moment with two large sheets, which she drops onto sofa.

BEATRICE. Thank you. Now, here goes. (*Takes a corner of each, knotting them together. While she does so PHYLLIS again disappears L., and returns with small valise and several articles, brush and comb, slipper-bag, nightdress case, etc., all of which she places on table.*) I'd better make a knot in the middle of each. That will help you to slide down.

PHYLLIS (*putting things in valise*). Yes. Oh, Triss, what *will* they say when they know?

BEATRICE. Well, you won't hear what they say, at any rate.

It's I who'll catch it the most, my dear. I'd like to know how I'm to get home again, too. I had hard enough work getting up to your room without being seen, although I came in by the back way.

PHYLLIS. You're a darling, Triss. You always were. Oh, I *must* take my rings, and a brooch or two, and my opal necklace. *They* aren't big—there's lots of room for them.

[EXIT L.]

BEATRICE (*alone*). Vanity, thy name is Phyllis. There, *that's* finished (*lifting sheet*). Now, how can I fasten them?

RE-ENTER PHYLLIS *with jewel boxes*.

PHYLLIS. What are you going to do?

BEATRICE. I don't know. I can't think how to fasten the end firmly enough to bear your weight. Oh, I could tie this one to the back of a chair and sit in the chair while you're going down. I could even hold the end, to make sure.

PHYLLIS (*putting boxes into valise*). You—you don't think I shall fall? (*Shuts valise*.)

BEATRICE. Fall? Of course not. Don't get frightened now. Think of Jack. (*Pulls out watch*.) Four minutes to eight.

PHYLLIS. Oh, Triss. (*Hides face on BEATRICE'S shoulder*.)

BEATRICE. Let me tie the sheet, dear. He will be here soon. (*Ties end of sheet to chair by window*.) Have you some thick string to lower the valise with?

PHYLLIS. Yes, in my room.

[EXIT L. BEATRICE *lifts valise onto chair by window, blows out and removes candle and looks out*.

RE-ENTER PHYLLIS.

PHYLLIS. Here is some. (*Gives it to BEATRICE, who ties one end to handle of valise*.)

BEATRICE. Put on your hat and a cloak, dear. He will be here very soon now.

[PHYLLIS *glances out of window, then runs hastily into bedroom, returning immediately with big hat in one hand and a long cloak over her arm*.

PHYLLIS. Is he there yet? (*Puts on hat*.)

BEATRICE (*looking out of window*). Not yet; it isn't quite time. Here, let me help you. (*Puts cloak around PHYLLIS*.)

PHYLLIS (*suddenly*). Ah, I've forgotten *such* an important thing. (*Clasps hands*.)

BEATRICE. What is it? Don't put your gloves on till after-

ward. You won't be able to hold the sheet so firmly. Well, what have you forgotten?

PHYLLIS (*tragically*). The note on the pincushion!

BEATRICE. Shall you write one?

PHYLLIS. Is there time?

BEATRICE. Yes, if you're very quick. I'll watch for him while you do it.

PHYLLIS (*sitting at table and writing*). Is he coming?

BEATRICE (*at window*). No.

PHYLLIS (*still writing*). You must pin it on after I'm gone. Is he coming yet?

BEATRICE. I *thought* I heard the latch of the side gate click *very* softly. Have you written it?

PHYLLIS (*blotting note and rising*). Yes. I've not said much. You can read it when I'm gone, and put it in the proper place for me. Is he there?

BEATRICE. He's coming. (*Draws back. PHYLLIS runs to window and leans out.*)

PHYLLIS (*calls softly*). Jack! Jack! Are you there? (*Slight pause.*)

BEATRICE. Is he?

PHYLLIS. Yes. He says am I ready? Jack! (*Slight pause*). Yes, I'm coming. I—I must say good-by to Triss. . . . What? . . . Yes, I'll be quick. (*Turns to BEATRICE.*) Good-by, dear. I don't know when I shall see you again, but I *never* shall forget you. Thank you a thousand times for helping me so. (*They embrace each other. To JACK.*) Did you call me, dearest? . . . I'll send the valise down now. Don't be afraid. It's a very small one. (*Lowers valise slowly by string through window.*) Have you got it? . . . Yes? What did you say? When am I coming. I will— Now. But oh, Jack,—I—I—*can't!* (*Suddenly draws back and clings to BEATRICE.*)

BEATRICE. Oh, you mustn't hang back now. Listen, Jack's speaking. (*Leans out of window.*)

PHYLLIS. What does he say?

BEATRICE. He says if you are not quick they may discover your intended flight, and *then*—

PHYLLIS. Oh, I'll go. I'll go. (*Approaches window.*) Jack, I'm coming. (*Climbs carefully over window sill, BEATRICE sitting or kneeling on chair and holding end of sheet.*) Good-by, dear Triss. To-morrow I shall be Jack's wife, and *no* one can come between us then. Yes, Jack, I—I *am* coming. (*Disappears.*)

BEATRICE (*leaning out of window*). Are you all right? Have you got her safe, Jack? (*Slight pause.*) Good-by, then, and

good luck to you. Take care of her, Jack. (*Watches for a moment.*) They're gone! (*Turns and advances toward front of stage and bursts out laughing.*) Oh, Phyllis! Phyllis! Phyllis! And she did it so beautifully, too, even to the note on the pincushion. (*Takes note from table.*) She said I might read it. Bless the child! (*Reads.*) "My Dear Aunts: I am going away to-night with Jack. Please forgive me. I can't help it, because we love each other. There is no time to write more. I shall always remember you with affection, and trust that you will not think too hardly of me. Yours, Phyllis." I ought to put it—

ENTER AMELIA and AGNES.

AMELIA (*glancing triumphantly round the room*). She has gone, then?

BEATRICE. Gone? I should think so. Jack has her safe enough now.

AGNES (*going to window*). Fancy eloping through the window with a knotted sheet in these prosaic days. Ah! to have had such an experience! Amelia, it was a brilliant idea of yours.

AMELIA. Say, rather, *one* of my *many* brilliant ideas. I flatter myself I am not limited to a single flash of inspiration. Yes, I am glad I thought of it. (*To BEATRICE.*) Mr. Pemberton acquiesced very readily, did he not?

BEATRICE. Dear me, yes. In fact, I—I almost think the idea *really* originated with him. Still, that is a minor point.

AMELIA. Ah, yes, a minor point. And she never suspected?

BEATRICE. Not the slightest bit. She was as miserable as could be till she got Jack's note to-night.

AGNES. She did not hesitate to go with him, then?

BEATRICE. Not for one second.

AGNES. I *knew* it was a case of true love. How happy the dear children will be together now. I am already longing to see them both again.

AMELIA. Bless my soul, Agnes, you're as bad as ever. I see where the child gets her sentimental notions. I really wonder at myself for allowing such a termination to the affair, and yet I wanted Phyllis to be happy as much as any one, I'm sure. Well, let us hope she will be.

BEATRICE. And the money Jack lost?

AMELIA. Only amounted to a thousand dollars, thrown away on some foolish experiment, but it stood us in good stead. A thousand dollars is a mere nothing to Jack Pemberton.

AGNES. So the dear child will have her romantic marriage after all, and will marry the man she loves and of whom we approve into the bargain.

BEATRICE. And has left the prescribed note on the pincushion as well, so as to leave no detail of her runaway match undone. Here it is. (*Gives note to AMELIA, laughing.*) I hadn't time, nor had she, to put it actually on the pincushion, but by a little stretching of the imagination we may suppose it came from there.

AMELIA (*reading*). H'm! H'm! Always remember us with affection, will she? Yes, doubtless, when she knows the truth. Here, Agnes.

AGNES (*reads*). Bless the child! To think she should remember to write when she was in such a hurry.

AMELIA. Don't be silly, Agnes. I'm surprised at you. It would have been a good deal more to be wondered at if she hadn't written, after all we've done for her.

BEATRICE. She didn't know then, nor does she now, how much you *have* done.

AGNES. Do you think she will forgive the deception?

BEATRICE. Forgive? Undoubtedly. He will not tell her till after the honeymoon, and by that time she will be not only in love with Jack, but also in love with being Mrs. Jack Pemberton.

CURTAIN.

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ACT II.—Among the hills.—Time, the next morning.—Ireland and Africa at war.—The “noble red man” joins in.—A big scare, and nobody hurt.—The missionary makes a trial.—“Big fool! Wah!”—The false message.—The robbery.—Old Ikey in the tolls.—The dude investigates and strikes a hard customer.—A villainous scheme.—The accusation of murder.—“Stand back! It’s my turn now!”

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MIKE, Josiah's valet IRISH DIALECT COMEDY
JEFF, Priscilla's man-of-all-work ETHIOPIAN COMEDY
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